

# Department of Human Services

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## Articles in Today's Clips Monday, October 9, 2006

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-10
*Foster Care	11-19
Domestic Violence	20-24
*Child Support	25-32
Health Care	33
Food Assistance	33-35
Elder Abuse	36
Early Childhood Development	37-38
Employment Training	39-41
News Releases	42-43

\*Important story at this spot

Published October 9, 2006  
[ From Lansing State Journal ]

Saturday's letters to the editor

## **Question shameful**

Tim Skubick should be ashamed of himself for asking, in the first gubernatorial debate, the most ridiculous question: "Is Governor Granholm indirectly responsible for the death of Ricky Holland?"

It is indeed a truly sad day when the tragic death of a young child is used for political purposes.

Robert Orwat

Grand Ledge



## Mom heads to Texas to try to prove innocence

Monday, October 09, 2006

By John Tunison

The Grand Rapids Press

HOLLAND -- With a Texas prison term still hanging over her head, Esther Gonzales wants to erase any notion she harmed her infant daughter.

The 24-year-old Holland woman is heading south today so she can be in a Hays County, Texas, courtroom this week to face a child abuse charge.

Gonzales and her husband, Cipriano Gonzales IV, are being arraigned Tuesday on the charge as the next stage of a case that began in March with their arrest on murder charges.

Since then, they were jailed for four months, taken from the Ottawa County Jail to Texas without a required extradition hearing and embroiled in a continuing controversy over two conflicting autopsy reports.

A Texas grand jury last month decided not to pursue the murder charge, but instead indicted the couple on charges of injury to a child, a felony punishable by five to 99 years in prison.

Cipriano Gonzales left for Texas about three weeks ago and now has a job there.

Esther plans to return to Holland after the arraignment and continue raising their 3-year-old daughter, Skyli, and working at West Michigan Uniform.

"We hope everything turns out OK," said Esther's mother, Mary Loreda, confident in the couple's innocence.

The Gonzaleses initially were accused of causing fatal head trauma to their 2-month-old daughter, Cynthea, who died just eight days after the couple moved from Holland to San Marcos, Texas.

All along, though, the couple maintained their innocence and claimed the baby simply stopped breathing as they tried to feed her a bottle.

Reports from two medical examiners in different counties showed a fractured skull and older rib fractures that were healing.

But the two examiners reached different conclusions -- the first ruled the skull injury was not lethal and labeled the cause of death as "undetermined," while the second concluded it as "blunt force traumatic head injury" from an object.

Cipriano's attorney, Leslie Halasz, of Austin, is not optimistic about reaching any plea deals with Hays County prosecutors.

"I don't expect we will be able to work it out unless they see the light and realize they made a mistake," she said.

Halasz still is trying to decipher the second autopsy report, issued by Tarrant County Medical Examiner Nizam Peerwani, and plans to hire an expert to look at both reports.

Peerwani did not have access to the infant's brain because it was accidentally discarded, but looked at slides of brain material.

"The second autopsy is very technical in language," she said. "It's not clear if he thinks the fracture was the immediate cause of death."

Halasz said she expects a trial in the next six to nine months.

**Send e-mail to the author: [jtunison@grpress.com](mailto:jtunison@grpress.com)**

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# ClickOnDetroit.com

## Police: Mom Uses Baby As Weapon To Beat Man

### *Baby Critically Injured*

POSTED: 10:50 am EDT October 9, 2006

**ERIE, Pa.** -- A woman used her 4-week-old baby as a weapon in a domestic dispute, swinging the infant through the air and striking her boyfriend with the child, authorities said.

"The baby was swung at the individual that she was arguing with," Erie 4th Ward District Judge Tom Robie said.

The baby was critically injured in the attack early Sunday, said District Attorney Bradley Foulk.

"Never, never, never. I can never remember anything like this," Foulk told the Erie Times-News.

Chytoria Graham, 27, of Erie, was charged with aggravated assault, reckless endangerment and simple assault. She was held Monday in the Erie County Jail in lieu of \$75,000 bail.

The infant, whose name and gender were not released, was taken to a hospital in Pittsburgh. Authorities did not identify the hospital, and the baby's condition Monday was not released.

Four other children were removed from the home by child welfare officials, Foulk said. The oldest of those children was 8 years old.

There was no immediate indication whether the man Graham is accused of attacking was the baby's father.

Authorities removed four other children from Graham's home and placed them with the Erie County Office of Children and Youth, Foulk said.

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Assistant principal charged in sex case

Saturday, October 07, 2006

By Rex Hall Jr.

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An assistant principal at a Kalamazoo middle school has been charged with sexually assaulting a teenage boy.

James Lighthizer, 53, who is on administrative leave from Milwood Magnet School, was arraigned Sept. 28 in Kalamazoo County District Court on four counts of third-degree criminal sexual conduct, Chief Assistant Prosecutor Carrie Klein said.

Investigators allege Lighthizer sexually assaulted a 15-year-old boy at two of Lighthizer's residences in Portage from May 2002 to December 2002. Klein said Friday that she didn't know whether the alleged victim, who is now 19, was a Kalamazoo Public Schools student at the time of the alleged assaults. He is believed to have met Lighthizer in a class Lighthizer was teaching, she said.

Portage police began investigating Lighthizer Aug. 3 after the alleged victim reported the incidents, Lt. Tom Palenick said.

Lighthizer is scheduled to be back in court Oct. 11 for a preliminary examination, when a judge will consider whether enough evidence exists to bind the case over for trial. He was placed on administrative leave Aug. 31, said KPS spokesman Alex Lee.

"As soon as we became aware of allegations, the accused was removed and placed on administrative leave," Lee said. "We are aware that a preliminary exam is set. This is now a matter for legal resolution, and that person will not return to our schools during this process. We are not in position to comment beyond that."

Following his arraignment, Lighthizer was released on a personal-recognizance bond, Palenick said. It prohibits him from having contact with the alleged victim or anyone under the age of 16, Klein said.

Gazette staff writer Julie Mack

contributed to this report. She can be reached at 388-8578 or

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Monday, October 09, 2006

The Detroit News

## Oakland Briefs

Pontiac

### **Woman's hearing set to begin in sex case**

A pretrial hearing for a Farmington Hills mom accused of having sex with her teenage son's 15-year-old friend is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. Tuesday in Oakland Circuit Court. Jami Lee Knox was charged in July with three counts of third degree criminal sexual conduct and three counts of using a computer to commit a crime, both 15-year felonies. Police say Knox, a mother of three, had sex multiple times with a 15-year-old and even posed as the boy's mother to get him excused from school.



## Berkemeier fined \$20,000

Saturday, October 07, 2006

By Steven Hepker

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Judge candidate Phillip Berkemeier was fined a \$20,000 sanction for filing a frivolous lawsuit and then asked for help from Attorney General Mike Cox as a "conservative, pro-life Republican."

Supporters of Diane Rappleye, his opponent for Jackson County Probate Court judge, say Berkemeier showed poor judgment in both fighting a questionable case and seeking a break based on his politics.

Berkemeier defends both actions.

He and another Jackson attorney, Elizabeth Warner, sued the Hillsdale Community Health Center, medical personnel and Child Protective Services stemming from the medical testing of a woman in labor who admitted she was under the influence of drugs.

"I have real concerns about how things were done, especially regarding something as sacred as removing children from a parent," Berkemeier said. "I hope we will be vindicated on appeal and in federal court."

As for the letter to Cox, it was not intended to seek political favor, he said.

"I wanted to say something about myself, to show that I don't go around filing frivolous lawsuits," Berkemeier said.

Berkemeier supporters and others, including the judge who leveled the sanctions, said it is unfair to pick one case from a candidate's career, especially a month before the Nov. 7 election.

But sanctions for frivolous lawsuits are rare, let alone \$20,000 sanctions, local attorneys and judges say. Several judges said they have issued a couple sanctions for \$1,500 or less.

Retiring Probate Judge Susan Vandercook, who supports Rappleye, said Berkemeier should have known better and avoided such a case, even if he was second chair.

"It was a function of him not being a very good attorney," Vandercook said. "He wants to be probate judge, and a big responsibility is abuse and neglect cases. Our job is to protect children."

Hillsdale County Circuit Judge Michael Smith eventually dismissed the suit and leveled the sanctions against Berkemeier and Warner.

"I find this case totally frivolous, totally unjustifiable and frivolous, one of the most frivolous cases I have ever seen," Smith said in a March hearing.

Assistant Attorney General Mark Schoen said he had never sought sanctions in 30 years, but told Smith "the facts underlying the case are demonstrably false."

Warner and Berkemeier filed in Hillsdale to voluntarily dismiss complaints against Child Protective Services, which is represented by Cox's office. They were moving the case to federal court.

Schoen called that a calculated, last-ditch attempt to avoid sanctions, and accused the Jackson lawyers of misusing the court process. Smith sided with Schoen.



He ruled the hospital staff and social workers acted in the best interest of the mother and baby, which was born 20 minutes after the woman arrived. The social workers and hospital staff were immune from being sued, Smith said.

Berkemeier wrote the letter to Cox March 30, saying he was taken aback by the Smith's actions.

"We have very limited personal assets," Berkemeier wrote, then identified himself as a "conservative, pro-life, Republican who has never been sanctioned in my 28 years of practice."

That letter is the chief source of political hay.

"I think it is a serious ethical problem for him to contact the attorney general, after the assistant attorney general has sought sanctions," Vandercook said. "It shows terrible judgment."

Rappleye declined comment on the matter.

Cox declined to waive sanctions, and he declined to meet with Berkemeier.

Spokesman Ari Faneuil said state attorneys will motion for a dismissal of the federal case and seek sanctions there as well.

"We sought sanctions because they made untruthful allegations directly refuted by court records," Faneuil said of the Hillsdale County case.

Warner and Berkemeier filed appeals of the case dismissal and the sanction. The appeal is pending with the Michigan Court of Appeals, and the \$20,000 sanction is on hold.

Judge Smith said he has issued sanctions for frivolous lawsuits four or five times in 10 years. His next-highest sanction, for about \$17,000, was against Rappleye's husband, Bill Rappleye, a previous judge candidate.

"Sanctions are rare and subjective, and I have been reversed on appeal one or two times," Smith said.

"What I determine frivolous, another judge could rule has merit. Getting sanctioned does not mean a lawyer is incompetent or bad."

Coincidentally, Smith was the assigned judge in a suit by Diane Rappleye contending Berkemeier's nominating petitions were invalid.

Smith ruled for Berkemeier in July, saying the suit lacked merit.

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Advocate for children honored

Monday, October 09, 2006

By **Cedric Ricks**

**cricks@kalamazoogazette.com 388-8557**

Jan Middlemas has been passionate about issues that affect children for more than two decades.

The executive director of the Kalamazoo County Child Abuse and Neglect Council routinely talks to civic groups, churches and college classes about ways to identify, prevent and heal the effects of child abuse and neglect.

She also maintains a collection of books, pamphlets and videotapes on child abuse and neglect.

Members of the public sometimes come looking for answers, and Middlemas said her agency is glad to help if it can. "We use books and videos, not frequently, but for the people who do use them they are gold," she said.

Today, Middlemas will be honored by the Michigan Children's Trust Fund with the Deborah Strong Champion for Children Award, at the trust fund's annual meeting at the Radisson Plaza Hotel & Suites.

The accolade is given to an individual who has committed a lifetime to protecting and advocating for children, said Rich Bearup, executive director of the Michigan Children's Trust Fund.

"The champion for children's award is not an award for Jan at the Child Abuse and Neglect Council," Middlemas said. "It's an award for our community. Nothing at (our agency) can be done without the backing of our staff, donors, supporters and volunteers."

"They are all champions for children," she said.

In Kalamazoo County, Child Protective Services investigated 1,985 cases of child abuse and neglect from October 2004 to October 2005, and substantiated 35 percent of the reports, or 698 cases. Greater awareness means more people may be reporting cases, Middlemas said.

"Years ago it was hush, hush and nobody talked about it," Middlemas said, noting many more professionals who work with children are required by law to report cases of suspected abuse and neglect.

Middlemas has been part of the council since 1984, starting initially as a part-time staffer who became a full-time employee and later executive director of the agency in 1997. She will retire from the agency at the end of this year.

"She is clearly one of the most respected people by her peers in the child-advocacy community," Bearup said, who described Middlemas a mentor and go-to person for advice about programs to prevent child abuse.

The Michigan Children's Trust Fund is a charitable nonprofit that distributes money raised from private donors to 72 child abuse and neglect councils across Michigan.

[Return to regular web page](#)

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October 9, 2006

## County, state take steps to resolve dispute over foster care bills

Oakland agrees to pay \$500,000 in unpaid invoices; billing process to be streamlined.

**Maureen Feighan / The Detroit News**

**WEST BLOOMFIELD** -- Ask Catherine Aylesworth about her eight adopted kids and her eyes light up with pride as she talks about her oldest who just left for France to teach, two others who play football and a fourth who is a cheerleader.

But ask the longtime foster mom about Oakland County's feud with the Michigan Department of Human Services over late foster care invoices, a battle she worries that could deter others from becoming foster parents, and her tone changes to anger.

"These children are not widgets," said Aylesworth, who has fostered more than a dozen kids and has a foster daughter, Soleil. "They're humans ... and of all the money that Oakland County could spend and the state could spend on anything, there isn't anything more deserving than these children."

Locked in a months-long dispute over unpaid bills and an inefficient billing process that has left social service agencies and foster parents for abused and neglected kids stuck in the middle, Oakland County and state human services officials say they're finally on track toward a resolution.

After weeks of meetings, Oakland County officials have agreed to pay roughly \$500,000 in unpaid invoices, likely by mid-October. The invoices were rejected because they weren't submitted within 60 days of the last day of the month services were provided, a policy the county implemented in February because it was sick of 2- and 3-year-old bills.

State human services officials have also tentatively agreed to add the county to a pilot "tracking" program in Wayne County that should streamline the billing process.

"The bottom line is the county finally really understood that they had a legal obligation to make these payments," said Laura Champagne, deputy director of the Human Services Department, referring to a state law that says foster care for county wards has to be split 50-50 by counties and the state. "And once we were able to step back from the political rhetoric, we were able to resolve the problem."

County officials say the 60-day rule will stay in place.

"We're not going to accomplish anything for the public by punishing those people (foster parents) who are trying," said Deputy Oakland County Executive Jerry Poisson. "We were able to work this out."

For months, private nonprofit agencies, which handle 92 percent of the foster care placements in Oakland County, have been forced to pay foster parents out of pocket for invoices that didn't meet the county's 60-day deadline. Foster parents are paid \$14 per child per day, plus a supplement depending on how severe their child's needs are.

Catholic Social Services of Oakland County is waiting for approximately \$44,000 in unpaid bills. Lutheran Child and Family Services of Oak Park is stuck with a \$41,000 bill for one child. And one set of foster parents in Maryland, taking care of a child from Oakland County, sued the state because they hadn't been paid.

[Return to regular web page](#)



## Foster care placements go up in Oakland

Of The Oakland Press

Fewer children are being placed in foster care across the state.

That's the good news.

The bad news locally is foster care placements in Oakland County are increasing.

The number of children in foster care is up more than 80 percent in Oakland County since 2000, according to the state Department of Human Services.

The DHS and prosecutor's office each say the other is at least partially responsible for the increase.

"We think a major reason is a significant philosophical difference between our agency and the Oakland County prosecutor's Office," local DHS Supervisor Margaret Warner said.

"We have a legal responsibility to do whatever we can to keep children safe and in their own homes with their families," Warner said. "The prosecutor feels the way to keep children safe is to remove them from their parents' care."

Prosecutor Dave Gorcyca's assessment of the DHS is harsher.

"I'm beyond frustrated," Gorcyca said. "The relationship is pathetic because of their blatant incompetence. They violate their own policies and procedures; they fail to investigate. As a result, we often proceed on solo petitions because they won't do their jobs. They're the worst bureaucracy in the state of Michigan, if not the country."

"Their policy is family reunification," he added. "As a general principle, it's a sound policy and one we encourage. However, we don't do it at the expense of the child's safety."

Children are placed in foster care when there is evidence of abuse or neglect.

According to the DHS, the foster care caseload in Oakland County was 862 in September 2000.

This September, it was 1,554.

Warner said there also are other reasons contributing to the increase in the foster care caseload, including high staff turnover and inexperienced child-welfare investigators.

Family Court Chief Judge James Alexander says there are two types of foster care placement: temporary and permanent.

Temporary placement means the family is offered services so the child can be returned to the family. Permanent placement occurs after the court finds substantial abuse or neglect and terminates the parents' rights.

Oakland County also is unusual compared with most counties.

"In other counties, DHS is the agency that brings all the cases,"

Alexander said. "Our prosecutor has its own division involved in child welfare. As such, there are times DHS says no and the prosecutor says yes.

"In the total scheme of things, it's good. Cases that could fall through the cracks of the larger state agency get picked up by the local agency," Alexander said. "The agency in this area is overworked. I think they're trying. We all hold DHS to a pretty high standard."

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# ROCHELLE RILEY: Aging out would be easier for youths

**BY ROCHELLE RILEY**

FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

*October 8, 2006*

Children who grow up in, then outgrow state care face poverty, homelessness, unemployment, and sometimes jail. But if the Legislature adopts new recommendations, they might finally get some help to get off to a better start.

Foster youth would leave state care at 21 -- and would:

- Get continuous Medicaid coverage.
- Attend Michigan colleges for free.
- And use the services of a Detroit-based Housing Resource Center that matches them with affordable housing.

A task force led by state Supreme Court Justice Maura Corrigan and Department of Human Services Director Marianne Udow submitted the 21 recommendations as a way to help the 450 youths who age out of the Michigan system every year. Nationally, 16,000 young people age out of state systems.

"This is probably the most comprehensive look we have ever taken at what we do and what we can do better for our older children in foster care," Udow said. The recommendations "cover everything from basic information to how we better prepare to help our children with education, housing, jobs, health care, summer employment. We cover the gamut."

Among the most exciting is a plan for a Detroit-based Housing Resource Center, which came from a suggestion I made last June. The state will put money toward the resource center that will teach youth how to look for and rent housing.

"Take credit for it," Udow told me. "Your advocacy helped us down the path and spurred us to focus on housing."

The task force report also seeks improved mentoring, so that every foster youth has a permanent connection with at least one caring adult before he or she leaves care. It also would improve young people's access to their birth and court records -- something that would make job searches and college applications easier. Most important: All the recommendations come with a time line for completion.

When legislators return to session, their first task should be to embrace this

## About this series

This is the latest in a series of columns by Rochelle Riley on the challenges faced by foster children who age out of the state system and are too old to receive further help. Last year, 457 of the state's 18,959 foster youths aged out of the system. At 18, many are basically left on their own to find housing, transportation, jobs and health care. Today's column reviews the state's proposal to make this crucial transition easier.

## Where to find help

Foster youths 14 and over or who have aged out of the system and need help in Wayne County can call the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative site at 313-456-1003 or Creating

report. Their second? To fund DHS at the level it needs to save children. The department, which has lost 4,000 employees since 1997, has 725 foster care workers.

When I look at the report, I think of Chilton Brown, who aged out two years ago and is living at Covenant House because he doesn't have a home, and Jonnie Hill, who had a toothache for months because she couldn't find a dentist who accepted Medicaid.

And I think of the children I haven't met yet who struggle from day to day, trying to live on their own before they're ready.

When legislators study the task force report, they must not lose sight of how important it is. It was mandated as a part of the DHS budget. It should serve as a blueprint, not as an excuse for not doing more.

*Watch Rochelle on "Am I Right" at 8:30 p.m. Fridays on Detroit Public Television (TV-56). Contact her at [rriley99@freepress.com](mailto:rriley99@freepress.com) or 313-223-4473.*

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Independence and Outcomes (CIAO) at 313-628-2302.

Former foster youths statewide can call Department of Human Services Youth Coordinator Shannon Gibson at 517-241-8904 to learn about the Youth in Transition program.

**Among the task force's most important recommendations:**

- The creation of a Web site to link foster youth to services and resources.
- Expansion of a summer training program that lets youth work in a career path of their choice.
- Continuous Medicaid coverage.
- Expansion of dental coverage because so few dentists accept Medicaid.
- Expansion of mental health services to foster youth until age 21.
- Housing assistance and

regular workshops  
on housing and  
landlord issues.

- Creation of a One-Stop Housing Resource Center in Detroit, with referrals for available, affordable rentals in Detroit, Hamtramck and Highland Park; two-year rental subsidy; and counseling on eviction prevention.

**Source:**  
**"Interdepartmental Task Force on Service to At-Risk Youth Transitioning to Adulthood: A report to the Legislature"**

**By the numbers**

**A national profile four years after youths age out of foster care:**

**50%** or fewer graduated from high school (vs. 85% of all 18- to 24-year-olds)

**13%** or fewer graduated from a four-year college

**25%** or more endured homelessness



**65%** could not keep  
a job for a year

**25%** or more of  
young men spent  
time in jail

**40%** had become  
parents

**Source: Michigan  
Department of  
Human Services**

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[Back](#)

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Article published Oct 8, 2006

## **Sarah Fisher Center leaves long legacy**

The Saint Vincent Sarah Fisher Center in Farmington Hills is closing because it is too expensive to operate, Sister Marie Judith Haupt said.

Part of the Sarah Fisher complex will be recycled. The Daughters of Charity, an order of nuns who operated the orphanage and child care center for 77 years, are closing the complex and moving on to other needs.

The 32-acre site will be adapted to other uses with the approval of the Farmington Hills Planning Commission and the City Council.

Because the complex is historical, the exterior of the administration building and three of the cottages will be retained.

The complex will be remembered as part of our heritage. Not only the Sisters of Charity, but the whole community helped to provide a place for needy children.

In 1929, the Charles Fisher family donated funds for a complex that was unique for its time. The Fishers were wealthy from their business, the Fisher Body Company.

The unique complex in Farmington Township they donated was designed for preschool children and infants awaiting adoption.

At the time, Farmington Township was a farming community and considered to be out in the country. There were 10 cottages, each designed for 24 children.

The whole complex was constructed during the summer and dedicated on Thanksgiving in 1929.

As time and needs have changed, various services were added and some discontinued.

In 1948, older children were cared for at Sarah Fisher, which became St. Vincent and the Sarah Fisher Center.

By 1972, babies were no longer allowed to be taken care of in an institution. The babies were placed in home foster care. Sister Marie Judith Haupt had worked at Sarah Fisher since 1970 and talked about her experiences in a recent interview.

She said that babies were still at the center when she arrived. At the time, a lady named Pauline prepared the milk for the babies who were housed in one of the cottages.

In 1972, the babies were placed in foster homes as required by state law. Older children came to the center.

Sister Marie Judith pointed out that now most of the mothers keep their babies. The Daughters of Charity have a program to educate young families to care for and support their children. This program is at Christ the King School in Detroit.

The Daughters of Charity have been caring for unwed mothers and their babies since 1869, Sister Judith Marie said.

She was a social worker, working with the welfare department when she decided to become a nun to help the poor.

Over the last 10 years, the Sarah Fisher Complex has been a haven for abused and neglected children. Sister Marie Judith supervised the oldest girls' cottage, where the children were ages 12-15.

Each cottage had 14-16 children. There were four children in a bedroom, each with a bed and closet. The cottages had a living room and dining area.

The youngsters ate together with the food prepared in a main kitchen and brought to the cottages.

There was a dinner time with the children in the cottage, a play time and study time set aside. For the little children, a story time was held.

Each cottage had a nun who had her own room and slept in the cottage. The nun was assisted by one or two helpers.

Now, because it has become too expensive to operate the complex, the children have gone on to other facilities.

As needs change, this complex will be recycled. The site is lovely with a stream running through it. Hopefully, it will continue to be an asset to Farmington Hills.

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# Cutouts bear witness to domestic violence's impact

## Sterling Heights joins cities nationwide this month honoring abuse victims

**BY SHABINA S. KHATRI**

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

*October 8, 2006*

There's a woman on display in Sterling Heights City Hall.

Or rather, a blood red, life-sized, woman-shaped wood cutout. Slender and standing at 5 feet 5 with one hand on her hip, the image is the first thing visitors see when they walk through the door and into the lobby.

It's a figure that has been turning heads since last week, when it went on display to commemorate Domestic Violence Awareness Month, observed across the United States in October.

Part of the national Silent Witness Program, the cutout is on loan from Beaumont Hospital in Troy, which has distributed about 40 silhouettes to churches, schools and municipalities across metro Detroit.

Each cutout represents a Michigan woman, man or child who had been killed through domestic violence.

The placard on the chest of the figure in Sterling Heights implores people to remember Lisa Lonchar and others like her.

Lonchar, a 42-year-old Warren resident, was killed in November by her live-in boyfriend, who shot her point-blank in the face after an argument. A jury convicted Michael W. Bedwell, 47, who had convictions for brandishing a weapon and domestic abuse, of second-degree murder in May.

Sharing Lonchar's story, said Mayor Richard Notte, could help others recognize or prevent abusive relationships.

"I think domestic violence is a bigger problem than a lot of people realize," he said Thursday.

The issue has become a big one in Macomb County, with deputies responding to an estimated 1,000 suspected domestic violence incidents annually. To deal with the problem, officials have created several initiatives, including the Macomb Community Domestic Violence Council, which in August issued a report recommending several ways to improve the response of law enforcement



A man walks past a cutout Friday at Sterling Heights City Hall that honors Lisa Lonchar, 42, of Warren, who was killed by her boyfriend. (WILLIAM ARCHIE/Detroit Free Press)

### Facts about domestic violence

- It's the leading cause of injury to women ages 15-44.
- One out of three women will experience domestic violence at least once in their lifetime.
- Three to 4 million women are battered in the United States every year -- about one every 15 seconds.
- About half of the nation's homeless women and children are fleeing domestic violence.

agencies and judges to domestic violence.

They are also teaming up with organizations like Beaumont Hospital, which held a ceremony earlier this month to recognize the victims of domestic violence and honor them through the Silent Witness program.

- Sixty percent of high school students have been involved in abusive relationships.

The initiative, said Joy Seguin, a nurse manager who serves on the hospital's domestic violence committee, aims to break the cycle of abuse.

**Source: Beaumont Hospital**

"The problem with domestic violence is that it hasn't come out of the closet," Seguin said Friday. "Our effort is to get people involved -- we want friends, relatives, neighbors, coworkers and city council members to help."

Also on display in Troy and Royal Oak is a cutout honoring Leila Armin, a 20-year-old tennis player whose boyfriend beat and stabbed her to death last June. Armin's father, a Beaumont physician, is one of several employees directly and indirectly touched by domestic violence, Seguin said.

"It affects us all in a multitude of ways," she added.

The Silent Witness program was founded in 1990 by a group of women in Minneapolis, after they saw friends and families devastated by domestic violence.

Since then, it has expanded to include silhouettes of the elderly to represent the growing psychological, physical and financial abuse against them.

Nationwide, there are also cutouts of infants and pregnant women, who are 60% more likely to be abused than nonpregnant women, according to some studies.

Contact **SHABINA S. KHATRI** at 586-469-8087 or [skhatri@freepress.com](mailto:skhatri@freepress.com).

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## Investigation clears Eminem of domestic violence charge

PUBLISHED: October 8, 2006

By Jameson Cook  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Eminem was investigated by police for domestic violence for poking his niece in the head with his finger, and threatened to kill the girl at estranged wife Kim Mathers' house in Macomb Township.

No charges were levied against Marshall Mathers for the Sept. 24 incident in which the rap superstar went to the home because he was angry at the 13-year-old girl, who is under his guardianship, for hanging up the telephone on him, according to police reports from the Macomb County Sheriff's Office.

Eminem, 33, who is the midst of divorce proceedings with Kim Mathers, yelled, "I'll kill you," and took the girl's cell phone as he left the home about 2:15 p.m. that Sunday. Eminem also made a reference to Kim Mathers while scolding the girl.

"Don't you ever hang up on me again," the girl quotes her uncle saying, in a written statement to police. "The next time you do you won't have anything at my house and will never see me again. And you wanna know the reason I left your aunt was because she had hung up on me."

Investigators from Macomb County Sheriff's Office and county Prosecutor's Office agreed that Eminem's actions did not necessitate an arrest warrant for misdemeanor domestic violence.

"There were no injuries and nothing to give an indication of a domestic assault," Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel said. "We don't think there was any intent to hurt her."

James Langtry, chief of operations at the prosecutor's office, said Marshall Mathers did not receive any special consideration due to

his celebrity.

"We treated it as any other criminal allegation brought to us," Langtry said. "There was insufficient evidence to warrant any criminal charges."

The girl says in the report that Eminem "was poking me in the head" and moments later raised his hand "as if he was going to hit me."

Eminem told police he "tapped her on the side of her head with this finger because she was not paying attention to what he was saying," said a report written by sheriff's Detective Sgt. Larry King.

Eminem on April 5 filed for divorce from Kim Mathers, 31, after less than three months of their second marriage. The two did not reach a settlement in the divorce case in a conference at Macomb County Circuit Court in September. The case has been sent to a mediator, and a trial date is scheduled for Dec. 19.

His 13-year-old niece, a daughter of Kim Mathers' sister, has been in the custody of Marshall and Kim, living with them at their prior address on Westchester Drive in Clinton Township.

Eminem's publicist, Dennis Dennehy, released a statement Friday night: "After an independent investigation by the Macomb County Sheriff's Office and a review by the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office, both have decided that the basis for the complaint was without merit, and the prosecutor has declined to issue any charges. Anybody who is remotely familiar with Marshall's life knows he is a caring and loving guardian of his niece."

Eminem is believed to be living in Oakland County but still lists his address at the Clinton Township residence, according to the police report.

Besides the teenage girl, at the home at the time of the incident was Kim Mathers' mother, Kathleen Sluck, 50, who lists addresses in both Ray Township and at her daughter's residence in Macomb, and Kim Mathers' youngest daughter age 4 or 5, fathered by another man.

Both Sluck and his niece say in their written statements that Eminem made the life threatening statement as he left.

Kim Mathers was driving home at the time of the incident and called police after being told about the incident.

Precipitating the incident was Eminem talking to his niece by phone about "her school clothing," Eminem told police. She "didn't like what she heard" and began "speaking over" Eminem before she hung up on him, Eminem told police.

Eminem told police he tried calling her back several times and tried calling Kim Mathers but got no answers. He said he went to the home "to make sure everything was OK over there," the report said.

Eminem entered the home without knocking or ringing the doorbell and went to the computer area, where his niece was at the computer and Kim Mathers' other daughter was on an adjacent bed. The 13-year-old put the younger girl on her lap.

Eminem told his niece, "You know she's saving your butt right now," the girl said in her statement.

He also accused her of being "selfish" and trying to break up him and Kim Mathers.

"You have always tried to separate me and your aunt. Always," the girl quotes Eminem as saying. "You take everything for granted at home. I'm signing shoes for charity doing this and that, and you're just a selfish kid."

Eminem took her cell phone, but it has been returned to her through an attorney and police.

Click here to return to story:

[http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/100806/loc\\_eminem001.shtml](http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/100806/loc_eminem001.shtml)





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Published October 8, 2006

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## Child support checks go electronic

By KURT MADDEN  
Lansing Community Newspapers

MID-MICHIGAN — Thousands of recipients of child support payments through the county's Friend of the Court soon won't hear the alibi: "The check is in the mail."

Support payments are now directly deposited electronically into personal checking, savings accounts or debit card accounts, said Allen Schlossberg, Eaton County's Friend of the Court.

State officials estimate only about a third of all child support recipients had been receiving their money electronically before new disbursement method began.

The new payment system was rolled out under a new state law in November of 2005 in four "pilot" counties, and has since been expanded to 70 more counties.

Eaton, Clinton and Ingham counties, according to the state's plan, were scheduled to begin using the system for the first time last month.

"We have been told that it is working very well. It is a blessing for everybody, and it should spell the end to the checks floating through the mail somewhere. You won't hear, 'The check is in the mail.' anymore because they won't be in the mail," he said.

According to the state office of child support, three notices are sent to client, asking them to request direct deposit or a debit card.

State officials say all recipients will be required to choose either direct payment to a personal bank account or a VISA-branded debit card.

Paper child support checks will no longer be mailed to customers, unless they meet hardship exceptions specified in state law.

Exemptions to electronic disbursement may be granted if there is a hardships caused by physical or mental disability, literacy or language.

Also, two or less payments per year, or individuals with home and work addresses more than 30 miles from an automatic teller machine or financial institution may also be exempted.

Schlossberg said, "With paper checks, there is a risk of stolen or misdirected checks. Additionally, with electronic disbursement, the funds are immediately deposited to the payer's account. The payer will be able to avoid going to the bank to cash a paper check."

If a person doesn't receive a support payment, the cause of the problem will be far easier to discern, Schlossberg said.

If a person decides to use a debit card, support payments are deposited directly to the card through the state's disbursement system.

There is no fee to use the card, and it may be used at all locations that accept Visa debit cards for point of sale transactions. But those who choose to use an ATM to access their debit card funds are subject to a fee.

Customers may also obtain cash with a purchase from Interlink merchants with a fee, state officials say.

For additional information on electronic disbursement, go to the child support section of the department of human services Web site, [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs) or [www.misdu.com](http://www.misdu.com).

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[\[Back\]](#)



## Lapeer adds ammo to get deadbeat parents

**LAPEER CITY**

**THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION**

Saturday, October 07, 2006

**By James L. Smith**

**jmsmith@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6365**

LAPEER - Deadbeat parents who hunt, fish or boat will soon be in the sights of the Lapeer County Friend of the Court.

Following the lead of nearby Oakland, Shiawassee and Macomb counties, Lapeer County is set to target the recreational licenses of parents who are six months or more behind in their child support, said Friend of the Court Emil H. Joseph Jr.

Joseph discussed the new program this week at the Board of Commissioners' committee-of-the-whole meeting.

Under state law, parents can lose driving, sporting or recreational licenses until the overdue money is paid or a satisfactory payment arrangement is worked out, Joseph said.

The county, which has 6,000 child support cases, recently received a list of 1,000 parents who have recreational licenses.

Not all of those parents are six months behind, though, and the department is currently doing a manual search to see which of the license holders could be subject to the suspensions Joseph said.

Letters to those who are subject to the suspensions will go out next week. Each year, the department will request new recreational license information.

The letters will require either a complete payment of all overdue child support or setting up a payment plan to do so, Joseph said. Otherwise, hunters caught by conservation officers hunting after a suspension order has been issued, will be considered as hunting without a license, Joseph said.

Because not all license outlets are equipped with online verification equipment, some deadbeat parents may still be able to purchase licenses, but they will not be valid.

Those who purchase licenses at a store or outlet with only manual license capability will be informed by letter that the license is not valid, Joseph said.

Warning letters alone are sometimes enough to spur payments on debts, said Debbie Kline, executive director of the Association for Children for Enforcement of Support in Virginia.

"Especially for a diehard hunter," said Kline, who is all for the plan.

But some worry that parents will be unfairly punished because of incorrect payment amounts in state support databases.

"We understand the importance of meeting obligations, but there are errors in the system on how much people owe," said Murray Davis, president of the National Family Justice Association.

In Shiawassee County, notices of proposed license suspensions began hitting mailboxes this week. The county began targeting recreational licenses in 2002, said Susan Thorman, Friend of the Court director.

"The expense for hunting should not come at the expense of a child's welfare," she said. "The cost of the license, ammunition, clothes and lodging for a season of hunting should be considered secondary to the clothing, lodging and food for a child."

Genesee County officials are investigating but haven't started any such program, said Friend of the Court John G. Battles.

"It can be a very effective tool," Battles said of the threats on recreational licenses. "The hunting license issue hits a certain segment of the population very near and dear to their hearts."

Genesee County has concentrated instead on liens against vehicles, land and other property as leverage to collect child support.

While the Friend of the Court can't control who buys a deer hunting or other recreational license, if a person is caught hunting, fishing or boating, a computer check by a conservation officer will turn up the violation.

At least one hunting advocate doesn't have a problem with the program, either.

"If you owe, you owe," said Dan Compeau, chief operating officer at Williams Gun Sight & Outfitters. "I hope (it works), if it gets them to pay."

Such a violation will be handled in the same way as a person driving on a suspended or revoked driver's license, Joseph said.

About 750,000 deer hunters spend about \$500 million annually in food, lodging, transportation and deer-hunting equipment, Joseph said.

Parents who have current payment agreements to clear back child support, and who have been faithfully making those payments, will not be targeted, Joseph said.

"If they are living up to their arrangements, we would not initiate the suspension," Joseph said.

"Whoever thought that up did a good job," said Board Chairman Dave Taylor, R-Metamora.

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Journal staff writers Linda Angelo, Bryn Mickle and Ron Fonger contributed to this report.

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Monday, OCT 09, 2006

## Cox wants delinquent dads jailed



### 75% of fathers in arrears earn less than \$10,000

By Diane Bukowski  
The Michigan Citizen

Forty billboards across Michigan show a prisoner in an orange jumpsuit, leg shackles and handcuffs. “We never treat deadbeats with kid gloves,” reads the message. The billboards are financed by Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox’s private Pay Kids Foundation.

**Mike Cox** Cox created the AG office’s Child Support Division, the first of its kind in the country, within days of taking office in 2003, eventually staffing it with 28 attorneys and investigators. The federal government underwrites two-thirds of the cost of the office.

Cox claimed that there was a “child support epidemic” in the state, with 630,000 children not receiving over \$8 billion owed in child support. For the first time, the state attorney general’s office took the initiative to issue felony warrants against so-called “deadbeats,” a job that had been primarily the province of county prosecutors’ offices.

“There had been a real lack of attention paid to this issue in Michigan,” said Cox spokesman Rusty Hills. “We’ve been able to raise almost \$28 million, to benefit over 3,200 children. Ninety-seven percent of it goes directly to the kids. We target those who can pay, but refuse to pay, including high profile people like Bennie Blades and James Toney.”

Cox began issuing press release after press release, boasting that he had charged former Detroit Lion Horatio “Bennie” Blades, boxer James Toney and Flint-born football star Andre Rison, among others, with felonies like child abandonment. The celebrities he targeted were almost exclusively African-American, many down on their luck after setbacks in their careers.

Cox also went to battle in the Michigan Legislature, campaigning unsuccessfully to lock up parents for 10 years if owing more than \$20,000. State law now provides for a four year sentence. His efforts did result in the passage of more stringent legislation increasing prison time for lower amounts of arrears, and making it easier to collect child support by intercepting workers’ compensation, insurance awards, inheritance and other income.

Amos Williams, the Democratic candidate for Attorney General, supports the county based Friend of the Court system to collect child support payments.

“The Friend of the Court has taken in a lot more money in delinquent support payments than his [Cox] office, even with him running through there picking off the low-hanging fruit. It is no problem to deal with those who can afford to pay, and the Friend of the Court would have dealt with them eventually,” Williams said in an interview.

### **Pay Kids Foundation**

Cox’s non-profit Pay Kids Foundation was financed by over \$465,000 in corporate contributions in 2003 and 2004. The contributions are anonymous because the foundation is considered a charity, not subject to state campaign finance law.

“The Pay Kids program is nothing but a political ploy and grandstanding by Mike Cox; he has no real concern regarding families,” Williams, the candidate, said.

Pay Kids is run by Cox’s wife Laura, who is a federal agent, and top aide Stuart Sandler. Sandler gained fame in a scandal two years ago, when he met with attorney Geoffrey Fieger in an unsuccessful effort to criminally prosecute Fieger for allegedly threatening to expose Cox’s extramarital affairs.

The foundation runs a website at [www.PAYKIDS.com](http://www.PAYKIDS.com), which posts names, photos and amounts owed for “Michigan’s Most Wanted” delinquent support payers. The site prominently lauds Cox’s efforts, even detailing his biography.

At one point, the foundation proposed a contest for children to submit artwork for the Pay Kids billboards that it finances. That venture was torpedoed by protests from fathers’ groups and child psychologists, who said the campaign would involve children in creating negative images of their parents.

Many have questioned whether Cox’s crusade is necessary, saying it unfairly demonizes parents, especially fathers, in a state with high unemployment and poverty levels. In some cases, they say, parents are mistakenly prosecuted when they have already made arrangements to pay support.

### **Most delinquent payers earn less than \$10k a year**

“More than 75 percent of child support arrears in Michigan are owed by parents making less than \$10,000 annually, according to a recent study,” said Marilyn Stephen. She is Director of the Office of Child Support, a division of Michigan’s Department of Human Services (DHS). Her office oversees the collection and distribution of all child support payments in the state.

In 2005, DHS distributed over \$1.38 billion in child support payments, ranking sixth highest in the nation, and over \$382 million in arrears, ranking fourth highest. Over \$909 million of the regular payments went to parents who had never been on state assistance. Another \$472.5 million was credited to those on current or former assistance. Those in

the latter category saw only a small “pass-through” amount in addition to their assistance checks, with most of the funds going to reimburse the state for the cost of assistance.

Stephen said criminal prosecution of delinquent payers is not always the best course.

“It can work both ways,” she noted. “In the most egregious cases, it might be the only thing that will work. But at the same time, the threat of criminal prosecution may cause some parents to be fearful about contacting the Friend of the Court or even visiting their children.”

Wayne County has nearly half the state’s 800,000 child support orders. Wayne County Circuit Court Chief Judge Mary Beth Kelly, who has expressed support for Cox’s campaign, has set up a special court docket to deal with parents more than \$10,000 in arrears.

### **Detroit fathers detail plight**

One of those is a 38-year-old Detroit father of four, a CDL-licensed truck driver with warrants out for his arrest for non-payment of over \$60,000. His name is being withheld for his protection.

“I’m basically damn near homeless because I’m scared to work,” he said. “I’m not able to work at my occupation because if I get pulled over by the police, they’ll send me to jail on the warrants. If you work anywhere, they can run your social security number and come and arrest you on the job. They’ve already come to my address once to try to arrest me. If I go to court, they’ll arrest me there. But if I don’t go to work, I can’t get the money to pay the child support.”

Nevertheless, he said that he is regularly involved in the life of his two youngest daughters for whom he owes the child support because their mother had been on assistance. He said he has them with him on a daily basis, in the role of “mommy-daddy,” helping them with their homework, cooking their meals, and playing and exercising with them.

Another Detroit resident, a 44-year-old father of three whose name is also being withheld, has been home only eight months after being incarcerated since 1986. Like thousands of others in Michigan’s penal system, he accumulated a child support arrearage while behind bars, which now totals nearly \$100,000. A warrant was also issued for his arrest.

“They picked me up and took me down, talking to me like I was an animal, like I had no dignity whatsoever,” he said. “I feel like they’re trying to criminalize all of us.”

He said he was working when he was picked up, and made arrangements to pay the arrears. Since then, he has been laid off.

“But I still get these booklets from the state telling me I have to pay \$150 a week,” he said. “My children are grown, and their mother won’t see any of that because most of it

goes to the state for when she was on assistance. My wife now is a working girl who's been trying to get support from the father of her other children, but the state's not interested in collecting that because it won't go to them."

Other states across the country, including Georgia, Colorado, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Florida, have developed comprehensive programs to assist delinquent parents. They help them find employment and training and provide them with needed social services so that they can not only help in the financial support of their children, but also return to participation in the children's lives.

Some states have also developed programs to cancel delinquencies for ex-prisoners and other payers in order to help them keep up with current obligations.

Stephen said that a similar program previously run by the State of Michigan Work First division lost its funding, and that responsibilities for assisting delinquent child support payers now rest exclusively with county and local governments.

Williams said he would take this approach.

"Once they're in arrears, a lot of people are afraid to have contact with the court because of possible criminal prosecution. Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy has established a program with a wholistic approach to getting fathers incorporated back into their children's lives, to pull them out of the danger zone. It's a program that's being copied in other states. As Michigan's Attorney General, I would be looking at implementing a similar plan on a state-wide basis," Williams said.

The two fathers interviewed for this story expressed hope that funds now devoted by Cox's office to jailing parents will be devoted under the next administration to re-establishing a support network of assistance programs for them.





# THE BAY CITY TIMES

## Volunteer Clinic raises \$4 million for operations

Monday, October 09, 2006

By **SCOTT E. PACHECO**

**TIMES WRITER**

The Helen M. Nickless Volunteer Clinic has surpassed its \$3.94 million fundraising goal, solidifying the future of the free health service provider.

As of Oct. 1, the clinic fundraising campaign had raised more than \$4 million, said Guy T. Moulthrop, co-chairman of the fundraising committee.

"Obviously we are very, very excited," he said. "When you have a project with a particular subject that makes a lot of sense to an awful lot of people, the battle is a whole lot easier."

The Volunteer Clinic provides free health care to people without health insurance. Since opening in 2004, the clinic has provided primary medical care, prescriptions and referrals to more than 4,000 patients, free of charge.

The clinic - in the Medical Mall, Suite 5, 1480 W. Center Road, Hampton Township - is open every Wednesday from 5 p.m. until the last patient is seen. An average of 45 patients are seen each Wednesday, according to figures from the Bay Medical Foundation.

Most of the work in the Wednesday night clinics is done by volunteers from all walks of life, and doctors and other medical professionals donating their time and expertise.

Still, money is needed for office supplies, drugs and to pay for a couple of staff members.

Included in the raised funds were clinic operating expenses of \$140,000 for 2005, \$150,000 for this year and \$150,000 for 2007, as well as \$3.5 million for an endowment fund to help keep the clinic running long term.

Moulthrop said the campaign was driven by private funds, which at about \$3.2 million accounted for about 80 percent of all money raised.

"We got tremendous support from the entire community," he said. "We had gifts ranging from \$5 to \$1 million and everything in between."

But the work is still not done, Moulthrop said.

With rising costs and patients coming into the clinic at a higher-than-expected rate, additional funds may be needed to keep the endowment fund at necessary levels.

"The need doesn't stop; we need to continue," said Michael J. Stodolak, co-chairman of the fundraising committee. "Just because the campaign has hit its goal doesn't mean that we're done."

The clinic is named after Helen M. Nickless, whose family donated a total of \$1 million. Other major donors include the Bay Area Community Foundation, Bay Regional Medical Center Auxiliary, the Osthelder Fund, the Wal-Mart Foundation and Bay City's Community Block Grant Program.

To give to the Volunteer Clinic, call 667-6264 or write to the Bay Medical Foundation - Volunteer Clinic, 1900 Columbus Ave., Bay City, 48708.



## Walkers take steps to curb hunger

Monday, October 09, 2006

By Josh Jarman

[jjarman@citpat.com](mailto:jjarman@citpat.com) -- 768-4945

Every winter, hundreds of Jackson residents must scrimp just to buy food. And sometimes they even go hungry.

To ease their suffering, more than 100 people took part in the annual Greater Jackson Area CROP Walk Sunday, traveling more than six miles and raising close to \$13,000 by that afternoon.

Although the walk is part of an international program, 25 percent of the proceeds will stay in the area.

The money will be evenly split between the Salvation Army's Community Pantry and the Immanuel Lutheran Church Food Pantry.

"It gets hard because people have to choose between paying the utility bill or paying for food," said Phil Fracker, co-coordinator of the event.

Fracker, who was toward the end of the long line of volunteers walking, said it is harder for many people after the holidays, because people are less motivated to donate after the "season of giving" ends.

"People are not just hungry during Thanksgiving and Christmas," Fracker said. "They are hungry all year long."

He said with the unemployment rate so high, he has seen an increase in the number of people who come to Immanuel's pantry, where he is a member. And it will only get worse come January.

"It sounds like utility bills might get a break this year, but it is still going to be tough," Fracker said.

Originally started after World War II, the walk used to be a 10-mile hike that was "a real endurance test," Fracker said. The effort is intended to symbolize hardship and to commemorate those who go hungry.

This year's event drew members of 12 area churches, which is part of its unique character, Fracker said.

"It's cross-denominational," he said. "So we get to walk with our brothers and sisters of various groups."

Ed Peterson enjoyed seeing churches' support for the walk, which is how he got involved.

Peterson is the principal of Cascades Elementary School, and said the walk is just one of the ways the community can fight hunger.

"A lot of the schools and churches have canned food drives all year long," he said.

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## **Food giveaway set**

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

**FLINT TOWNSHIP**

**THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION**

Monday, October 09, 2006

**By George Jaksa**

**JOURNAL STAFF WRITER**

Food will be given away from 5-7 p.m. Wednesday or as long as supplies last at Westside Church, 5090 W. Pasadena Ave. in a program sponsored by Westside Church and Crossover, Downtown Outreach of Flint.

- George Jaksa

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## Man jailed in death

Monday, October 09, 2006

REED CITY -- A man who pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter in the death of his malnourished, dehydrated mother has been sentenced to a year in jail and five months probation. Dennis Delleva, 52, of Macomb County's Clinton Township, will receive credit for nearly seven months served in jail. He also must pay \$1,720 in fines and fees and participate in substance abuse treatment. Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox in March charged Delleva in the January 2004 death of his mother, Estelle Delleva, of Osceola County

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Published October 8, 2006

## Exploring careers: Early Childhood Education

By SUE LOUNDS  
Editor

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ST. JOHNS — The newest of 10 career development programs offered in Clinton County is preparing the future daycare providers of Clinton County.

"There is a lot of skill that goes into being a childcare professional," says Tricia McKay, an instructor for the Early Childhood Education course. "It's a process that is learned."

The course is helping 15 high school juniors and seniors from four of the county's six high schools learn what it takes to be a full-time child care provider.

Over the course of the school year, the students will study theories of early childhood development as well as the ages and stages of child development and how they relate to childcare. They will learn how to become a licensed child care provider.

"The quality, skills and knowledge of a child care staff have a great effect on the quality of the day care," she said.

The class is one of 10 career exploration programs offered by CCRESA. Classes are open to juniors and seniors in all six Clinton County school districts.

Students enrolled in the program are earning credits toward their high school graduation and have the opportunity to earn college credits from Lansing Community College.

"This course, because of the length of it, is actually a combination of three LCC classes," said McKay. Those classes are Foundations of Early Education, Health and Safety and CPR. To receive the college credits, students must meet certain criteria.

The first half of the school year will primarily involve classroom learning. Some class time will be structured like a traditional high school class, with a textbook, class discussions, assignments, quizzes and so on. The students will spend time on group work, hands-on projects and activities and exploratory learning. They'll also do some classroom observations in the Headstart classes at CCRESA.

"I want to give them a sense of what it's like to be in an early childhood setting," said McKay. "They need to realize it is very different from caring for someone you are related to or caring for just one or two children at a time."

McKay plans student activities around the four areas of development — cognitive, physical, social and emotional.

"When we do something, I ask them to consider how the activity relates to development," she said. "I want them to understand how activities can impact development at different stages."

Students also learn what kinds of activities are appropriate for different age groups.

For the second half of the year, McKay hopes to have all the students doing internships three days a week in day care programs around the county.

Childcare providers must be licensed in Michigan. To maintain their licensing, providers are now required to participate in yearly training. Staff in a childcare center must have 12 hours of classroom training each year. In-home childcare providers must have 10 hours of training annually.

"I stress to my students that being a professional means you are constantly learning," said McKay.

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[\[Back\]](#)

## Skills training offered for welfare recipients

**By Brian Mcvicar**

Capital News Service

LANSGING — Five employment agencies are trying to help struggling families move off welfare and into long-lasting skilled jobs.

Michigan Works offices within Wayne, Kent, Oakland, Monroe, Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac and Lapeer counties were awarded \$1.17 million for the 18- month JET pilot program.

“The Jobs, Education and Training approach fundamentally changes the way we move families off welfare and toward self-sufficiency,” said Marianne Udow, the director of Michigan Department of Human Services. “Instead of telling welfare recipients to ‘get a job, any job,’ the program supports them in developing job skills that help them move out of poverty.”

Under the state’s current welfare assistance program, recipients must first look for work and then receive training, said Brian Marcotte, section chief of the welfare reform unit at the Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

But under the JET program, Marcotte said, applicants are tested before they look for work. He said that approach shows people their problems early so they can receive training before they search for a job, making their search more effective.

People can be trained for anything from interview skills and resume writing to earning a GED or job-specific training.

If the pilot program is successful, it would be expanded to eight more Michigan Works offices, Marcotte said.

Benzie, Grand Traverse, Muskegon and Antrim are among the counties that will be covered by the eight work offices. Marcotte said the expansion programs could begin operating by December.

Michigan Works offices across the state work with business leaders, local governments and state officials to offer support services, employment and training programs to help develop the state’s workforce.

JET will also extend post-employment services from 90 to 180 days.

Post-employment services are important, Marcotte said, because they help people adjust to their new jobs by paying for clothing, transportation and day care.

“When you’ve got a job you’re not on your feet (financially) within three months,” he said.

Marcotte said that the Michigan Works Employment and Resource Center for Manistee County is one of the eight work offices that JET will expand to after the pilot programs conclude.

Phyllis Steketee, career adviser at Northwest Michigan Works in Manistee, said she would like to see the JET program expand local opportunities.

She said providing the right training will lead people to good jobs.

"I have a large number of workers that don't have a GED," she said. "What's available to them? Not much."

JET will be helpful, Steketee said, because parents won't have to work when they're training or taking classes. It's too hard on parents to take care of their kids, work and go to school at the same time, she added.

The program will also help the state's economy because a skilled workforce will help attract new businesses to the state, Steketee said.

"I think there's lots of possibilities for folks."





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## Virtual Job Fair to provide the tools to succeed

**DETROIT** – Public and private stakeholders from across southeast Michigan are working together to put on what may be the largest employment and resource expo in the region. The Southeast Michigan Partnership will hold the second Working Together: Southeast Michigan Employment, Training & Family Resource Expo, on Wednesday, Oct. 11, from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., at the Michigan State Fairgrounds & Exposition Center. The event and parking are free.

One of the many services available to jobseekers at the Oct. 11 Expo will be the Technology Center – a bank of 75 computers with Internet access and several printers that will allow attendees to work on their resume, search for jobs online and apply for jobs through the Web. Although the Oct. 11 Expo will officially close at 3 p.m., the Technology Center will remain open until 5 p.m. to accommodate attendees who wish to utilize the computer services. Volunteers will be on hand to assist people. This year's event will also include a Virtual Job Expo through the Michigan Talent Bank. This service will be active Oct. 9 – 13, 24-hours a day and provide anyone the opportunity to go to [www.uwsem.org/expo](http://www.uwsem.org/expo) and preview the numerous jobs available through more than 100 employers. The Expo's Technology Center and virtual job fair are made possible through the combined resources of the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth and the Michigan Department of Information Technology, which are among the several partners hosting this year's event.

"It is important that jobseekers take advantage of this opportunity to connect with employers who are recruiting workers, not only at the physical Expo at the Michigan State Fairgrounds, but also at the virtual Expo through the Michigan Talent Bank," said Ardis Cazenov, director, Labor Exchange Services, Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth. "We want to educate jobseekers in the methods and tools used to connect with employers online, a fast-growing trend that shows no signs of slowing down."

In addition to the virtual jobs, the Expo will include job opportunities from more than 130 on-site employers. It will also offer training and career development opportunities, as well as provide information and resources to help individuals and families break down some of the barriers that prevent gaining and retaining employment, such as child care, transportation and other issues. These opportunities and resources will help provide pathways to success.

The partners involved in this year's Expo include the Detroit Workforce Development Department, the Governor's Office for Southeastern Michigan, the Michigan Department of Human Services in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, the Michigan Department of Information Technology, the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth (Michigan Talent Bank), Michigan Works! in Oakland and Macomb counties, the Southeast Michigan Community Alliance, and United Way for Southeastern Michigan.

Jobseekers and employers can call the United Way 2-1-1 by dialing 211 or 1.800.552.1183. You can also go to [www.uwsem.org/expo](http://www.uwsem.org/expo) to pre-register.

Sources:



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## News Release

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### **DHS representatives to participate in NGA welfare reform panel** *State's Jobs, Education and Training program to be in spotlight*

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**October 9, 2006**

LANSING – Department of Human Services representatives will speak about the state's new welfare reform plan – Jobs, Education and Training or JET – during the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices meeting Oct. 10-11 in Washington, D.C.

Donald Mussen, acting director of DHS Family Support Programs who coordinates JET implementation for the department, will participate in an Oct. 10 panel discussion of state initiatives during the policy-training seminar "Setting a New Course for State Welfare Programs".

As part of a panel discussion, Mussen will participate on a panel called "Preparing for Work: Designing Effective Education and Training Programs within the Rules." Mussen will focus attention on elements of Michigan's JET program including:

- Individualized planning with welfare recipients that will identify appropriate skills training.
- Planning with employers, colleges and other training institutions to assure that education and training meets the economic development needs of the community.
- Plans under development with community colleges to offer programs that integrate basic remedial skills education into associate's degree programs.

"JET fundamentally changes the way we move families from welfare to self-sufficiency," Marianne Udow, director of Michigan Department of Human Services, said. "Instead of insisting that welfare recipients get a job, any job, JET will help them overcome barriers and move permanently from welfare and poverty to self-sufficiency."

"In the October meeting Don Mussen will carry our message to a national audience about where we are headed and how we project the JET initiative will help Michigan meet federal employment standards."

JET is a statewide partnership between Michigan departments of Human Services and Labor & Economic Development, Michigan Works! Agencies, and local workforce development boards. It has been piloted in four counties and will be expanded to half the state during the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. JET is designed to move families to self-sufficiency while helping the state achieve federal standards requiring 50 percent of welfare recipients to participate in work or work readiness activities.

For more information about the Department of Human Services, go to [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs)

For more information about JET go to [www.michigan.gov/jet](http://www.michigan.gov/jet)



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### **Governor Granholm commemorates 20<sup>th</sup> year of Child Support Month**

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**Oct. 9, 2006**

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm has declared October Child Support Month in Michigan. This is the 20<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that the state has commemorated a program that improves the lives of children and their parents by ordering, enforcing and disbursing some \$1.38 billion each year.

“Michigan families and their children live better because of progressive program enhancements and the commitment of Department of Human Services staff and its partners who impact the lives of children every day,” said Marianne Udow, director of the Department of Human Services. “Putting children first is the guiding principle for the Department’s Office of Child Support and its partners.”

The Office of Child Support works with county Friend of the Court and prosecutors to enforce child support orders, locate parents, collect and disburse payments. More than 584,000 children were owed support in fiscal year 2005, and approximately 435,000 received support, said Marilyn Stephen, director of the Department of Human Services Office of Child Support.

“Those statistics are terrific, but we realize that a child and custodial parent who don’t receive their support don’t care about the numbers, they need our help,” Stephen said. “That is our top priority.”

In 2006, the Office of Child Support implemented several program upgrades to enhance its services to families. An online lookup allows custodial and non-custodial parents who haven’t kept their address up to date to find unclaimed funds. By the end of January 2007 all counties will be disbursing child support via electronic deposit to the custodial parent’s bank account or to an electronic debit card. Hospitals can find assistance online in meeting the legal requirements in establishing paternity after the birth of a child.

“These programs help us get the money to families much more quickly,” Stephen said. “More children rely on the child support program than any other state program, with the exception of the public school system.”

**For more information about the Office of Child Support, go to [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs)**